

SPRING REVIVAL

On March 24th, 25th, and 26th, the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Facility hosted its second annual spring revival. All youth, regardless of their religion, were allowed to attend. Each night, at least eighty students filled the chapel. Evangelist Andre Walker, from Dime Box, Texas, preached powerful messages of redemption, freedom, and hope for the future. Ms. Melisha Mason, from Bangs, Texas, led the worship. Special thanks goes to Pastor Marcus Wasson, Mr. Steve Moss, Mrs. Kevelle Bailey, and all the other volunteers who came out to support this exciting event. The students were deeply impacted. Here is what happened this weekend in the words of the youth who attended:

“I was mad. Then I went to the revival and all my anger just went away. I was dancing! It was good. I feel good!” –J.M.

“He broke it down. Other people don’t do that. They don’t break it down to us.” –D.F.



McLennan County Open House

On April 13, 2017, McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility in Mart, Texas hosted an Open House for their Education department. Parents and youth came together to meet the teachers that work daily with the youth and learn how they are doing in their education. The teachers took this time to show the parents what the youth have been doing in class, how



they can take advantage of the time in TJJD to get caught up with credits, and what opportunities are offered by our education department with vocational certificates. One parent was able to sit in on a college class that the youth was attending and hear the speeches being presented that day in class. Parents and youth were also able to enjoy refreshments during this time together. The McLennan County Resource Council for Troubled Texas Youth sponsored the event by supplying the refreshments.

Questions or Comments?

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THE FAMILY CONNECTION

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

JULY 2017

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Editor's Corner



This month (July) marks the first anniversary for our family newsletter. It is my hope that families are getting noteworthy information in the newsletters that will help them stay connected with their child in the TJJD facilities. Families may expect changes in the way this agency is sending out notifications and other correspondence regarding their child. Money and resources have been very limited for TJJD this year, and the agency

is making efforts to lower spending in every way possible. Mailing information such as orientation packets and individual case plans through postal mail is costly to the agency. TJJD will begin sending the majority of family notifications using electronic secure file transfer. Secure file transfers by electronic mail is a means of keeping information confidential.

Families should provide their email addresses to their children's case manager. The family's email address will be entered into their child's record and will be used as a regular means of providing families with information. All confidential information sent to families using electronic mail (email) will be done using the highest means of security. However, families should be aware that if they *reply* to the email, it then becomes a non-secure communication.

Often, youths' families move from their physical address and they fail to notify their child's case manager. When this happens, it becomes difficult to keep lines of communication open with family members. Email addresses are more permanent and email communication will add stability to the parent/staff correspondence. If you are not comfortable receiving your child's information using email correspondence, you may inform your child's case manager that your preference is to receive your child's information at your postal address. We recommend that you still provide an email address as a back-up means of communication. Direct your questions or comments to Rebecca.Garza@tjjd.texas.gov or you may call 512-490-7662.





Mother's Day Celebration at Mart RTC

On Saturday May 6th, 2017 MRTC hosted a mother/son luncheon in honor of Mother's Day. Nineteen youth and 42 family members participated in the event. The mothers and family members were served a meal before participating in a family worship service. Several boys read poems and sang songs that were dedicated to their mothers. At the end of the event each youth presented his mother/guardian with a Mother's Day card and a rosebush they could take home and plant to signify the beauty of their relationship and the growth and blossoming of their child making changes in his life.



Clothes Influence Our Performance

What you wear can influence your thinking and negotiating skills and even your heart rate (Scientific American Mind Journal, January 2016), and to ensure that TJJD youth are appropriately dressed for different occasions each of our facilities has clothing closets where our youth are able to select trousers, dress shirts, shoes, belts and many other types of apparel. Some of the instances when youth need special attire are when leaving on parole, taking a graduation photo, attending a sports banquet, going on a job interview, and perhaps for a special religious ceremony. At some locations, the facility has collaborated with the Salvation Army to provide a \$100 voucher for youth when leaving on parole. Other facilities are able to provide a gift card for the youth to buy the necessary clothing. One of the secure facilities reported that in the year 2016, 131 youth used the clothing closet when released to parole or a halfway house and 92 used it for special events on or off campus. Many of the youth benefit from these clothing closets and some successful job placements have taken place due to their existence.

Cooking For Life at McFadden Ranch

Twelve youth completed the "Cooking for Life" class at McFadden Ranch.

They learned how to shop, prepare and cook three meals. For the breakfast meal, the youth had a choice of an omelet with bacon and cheese or eggs and chorizo. For lunch it was BBQ chicken or tacos. For the dinner meal, they could prepare lasagna or fajitas.

The youth used the newspaper and marketing flyers to shop and compare prices at different stores. They learned about using coupons and stretching their budgets by cooking at home versus eating out.

The expense for the class, which totaled \$562, was funded through a grant made possible by the State Volunteer Resource Council. The total includes the expenses for groceries, pots and pans and an apron and journal for each youth that participated in the class.

All of the youth said that they learned a lot and they enjoyed the class – especially the food.



Tamayo House Youth Feed the Homeless

Ruben Treviño (Human Services Specialist IV) is a valuable team member at Tamayo House. Mr. Treviño has been with the agency for over 20 years and serves as the Community Service Coordinator for Tamayo House. Mr. Treviño approached the local Sam's Club located in Harlingen, Texas and was able to get \$250.00 worth of food donated to the local Loaves & Fishes to feed the homeless. On April 7, 2017, Tamayo House students and six volunteers were able to feed 365 needy people. The meal consisted of a sandwich lunch plate and a spaghetti dinner. Between the staff, youth and volunteers, over 300 hours of community service were performed.



The Chosen Ones



We are thrilled to announce the debut of The Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex choir, The Chosen Ones! These kids have been working so hard to perfect the talents that God has given them and to use them for His glory. We currently have nineteen members from five different dorms. They sing in our chapel services on Sundays and for special events on campus, including Family Day. On March 17th, we hosted Ron Jackson's very first choir concert. The youth sang eleven songs, three written by our students. The entire campus attended! Our long-term goal is to take them off-campus to spread their passion for worship across the community and the state!

"I had the privilege of attending the choir concert. This group of kids has worked hard and it shows. We have some talented kids. I want to thank those staff who attended. So often the kids we receive in the facilities had very little support from people in the community and feel no one cares. Your attendance shows them their positive work and accomplishments matter." -April Jameson, Superintendent

What is a "Family?"

At one time, we could say that it was a married father and mother and their biological children living under one roof. Now, times are changing and a new definition of family is emerging in our society. In TJJD, we want our youth to have as much support from their families as possible. Family members related by blood or heritage are not the only ones that can provide support and nurturing to youth in their time of need. A group of TJJD youth met with case managers, a parole officer, and psychologists and talked about what family means to them and who should be included in the TJJD definition of family. Out of that discussion, this agency has adopted the following definition when referring to family.

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department defines a youth's family as including the following individuals:

- biological, adoptive, step, or foster parents and grandparents, legal guardians, to include the spouse or domestic partner thereof;
- siblings (biological/step/adopted), to include the spouse or domestic partner thereof;
- spouse, or the parent of a biological child;
- biological or step children;
- any other individual related by blood; and
- caregivers and supportive individuals, identified by the youth and/or parents/guardians as important, and whose positive involvement contributes to the success in the youth's rehabilitation process. Examples of supportive individuals are godparents, domestic partners, in-laws, a youth's fiancé, and coaches.

The above named individuals may now be recognized as family members who can assist youth in making a smooth transition back into the community. This broader definition of family may allow the TJJD staff to work with other supportive individuals that may be able to provide housing, guidance, financial assistance, and other types of support to youth.

